


Fescue Eradication Control Job Sheet



Introduction

Tall fescue has very little to no wildlife value. Although it can be a very desirable plant for livestock forage production during early spring and fall, it becomes dormant in the summer with very low forage quality. Over 80% of tall fescue in Tennessee is endophyte fungus infected. A balanced livestock forage program should have a minimum 10% warm season forage base.

Alternatives for Control of Tall Fescue

Following are three methods for fescue eradication. Before using any of these methods, remove any old stem or duff by mowing or by burning in early spring. Always consult with experienced personnel to plan and conduct a controlled burn. Contact the TN Division of Forestry for additional assistance and permitting. These guidelines comply with University of Tennessee recommendations for pesticide applications.

I. BEST METHOD FOR CONTROL OF TALL FESCUE (*not applicable on Conservation Reserve Program or Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program contract acres*)

Start one year prior to establishment of desired vegetation.

STEP 1 Spring-Gramoxone Extra

The year prior to establishment mow to prevent fescue from producing seed. About March 1 when tall fescue is actively growing and less than 4" tall kill the fescue by applying 24 oz. per acre of Gramoxone Extra. For ground equipment the minimum spray per acre per application is 10 gal/ac.

STEP 2 Summer-Crop

Planting a crop such as corn, sorghum, sudangrass hybrids, soybeans, etc. has been the most successful method of killing tall fescue. Soybeans are preferred because of the smooth seedbed present after planting a crop. Herbicides used on soybeans are a benefit for weed control during native grass establishment the following year (especially when the new planting method is no-till). Where erosion is not a problem, conventional soybean planting is preferred.

Choose either 3a or 3b as a compliment to steps 1 and 2.

STEP 3a.

Fall-Roundup Ultra, Spring-Gramoxone (No emerge activity)

In the fall (September 15– October 31) when vegetation is 6-12" tall apply Roundup Ultra at a rate of 1 quart per acre. In the spring just prior to planting apply 24 oz. of Gramoxone Extra when vegetation is green, but not over 4" tall. For ground equipment the minimum spray per acre for each application is 10 gal/ac. From 10 to 21 days after the initial application evaluate the need for a second application of herbicide. If needed apply 16 oz. of Gramoxone Extra, vegetation should be green but not over 4" tall. When using Gramoxone Extra do not exceed 3 pints (48 oz.) per acre total in preparation for reseeding.

Or STEP 3b.

Fall-Plateau and Roundup, Spring-Plateau (pre-emerge activity)

In the fall (September 15–October 31) when vegetation is 10" tall apply 8 oz. of Plateau (see footnote) plus 2 pts/ac of methylated seed oil plus 1 qt/ac of Roundup Ultra. In the spring just prior to planting apply 4 oz/ac of Plateau plus 2 pts/ac of methylated seed oil for annual weed and seedling tall fescue control.

II. Second Best Method to Control Tall Fescue

Start early fall prior to a spring seeding of warm season grasses.

STEP 1. Fall-Roundup Ultra

When tall fescue is actively growing and 6" to 12" tall apply Roundup Ultra at a rate of 1 quart per acre in 10 gallons of water.

**STEP 2. Winter-Small grain**

Establish small grain such as wheat or rye using a seeding rate of 1.5 to 3.0 bushels per acre. If erosion is not a problem conventionally plant small grain.

STEP 3. Spring-Gramoxone Extra

In the spring, approximately March 1, kill the small grain and any remaining tall fescue by applying 24 oz. per acre of Gramoxone Extra. For ground equipment the minimum spray per acre for each application is 10 gal/ac. From 10 to 21 days after the initial application evaluate the need for a second application of herbicide. If needed apply 16 oz. of Gramoxone Extra, vegetation should be green but not over 4" tall. Do not exceed 3 pints (48 oz.) per acre total in preparation for reseeding). New seedings may be accomplished same day as last spray occurs.

Or STEP 1. Fall-Plateau and Roundup

In the fall when vegetation is 10" tall apply 8 oz. of plateau plus 2 pts/ac of methylated seed oil plus 1 qt/ac of Roundup Ultra.

STEP 2. Spring-Plateau (pre-emerge activity)

In the spring just prior to planting apply 4 oz/ac of Plateau plus 2 pts/ac of methylated seed oil for annual weed and seedling tall fescue control. New seeding may be accomplished same day as last spray occurs.

III. Third Best Alternative to Control Tall Fescue

Start early spring prior to a spring seeding.

Spring-Gramoxone Extra 2x.

About March 1 when tall fescue is actively growing and less than 4" tall kill the fescue by applying 24 oz/ac of Gramoxone Extra. From 10 to 21 days after the initial application, evaluate the need for a second application of herbicide. Apply 24 oz. of Gramoxone. Vegetation should be green and not over 4" tall. For ground equipment the minimum total spray per acre for each application is 10 gal/ac. Do not exceed 3 pints (48 oz.) per acre total in preparation for reseeding. New seedings may be accomplished same day as last spray occurs.

Or Late Spring-Plateau and Roundup Ultra.

In the spring apply 12 oz/ac of Plateau, plus 2 pts/ac of methylated seed oil, plus 2 qt/ac of Roundup Ultra. Apply when fescue is in the boot stage. New seeding may be accomplished same day as last spray occurs.

Or Late Spring-Roundup Ultra.

Apply 3 quarts of Roundup Ultra per acre when most plants have reached boot to early seedhead stage of development.

Points to Remember!

It is best to control tall fescue one year prior to establishment of alternative vegetative cover. Do not allow previous year tall fescue to make seed. When warm season grass fields are to be grazed, livestock should not have ingested fescue seed within the last two days. Where erosion is not a threat prepare a seedbed and plant. Conventional planting can be advantageous in destroying old fescue roots, and providing a more level seedbed; however, more tall fescue seed may be brought to the surface with tillage early in a program to control tall fescue. Conventional planting can be used on steeper slopes when alternative strips (e.g. 50' wide) are established in different years. Establish alternative vegetation if sufficient natural regeneration to prevent soil erosion is not expected to occur.

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Footnote:

Plateau herbicide may be used on Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem and Indiangrass at planting, or any time thereafter, including after seedling grasses have emerged or to perennial stands (dormant or actively growing).

Switchgrass, Sideoats grama, Eastern Gamagrass and several forbs have a low tolerance to Plateau and therefore should only be applied at low rates where some stand thinning or loss can be tolerated. Rate of application varies for different species, always follow label for recommended rates and dates of application.